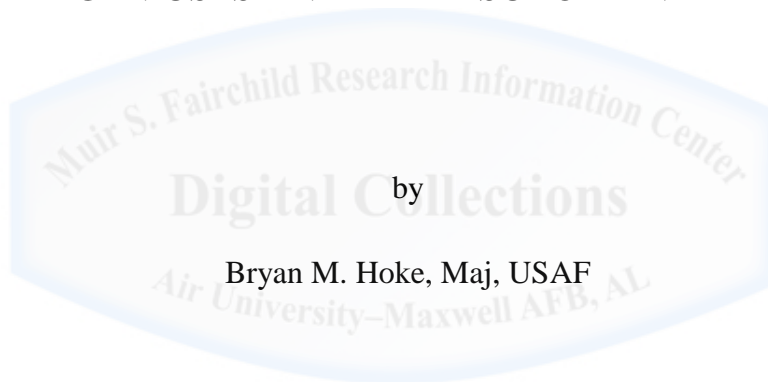AU/ACSC/2014

AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

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TRANSLATING GENIUS:

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MILITARY
GENIUSES AND A KEY-SUBORDINATE

by

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A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

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# PREFACE

This research paper was, in part, motivated by previous command situation I experienced in the Air Force, when I worked for a small unit led by an unqualified genius, who had turbulent relationships with both military and civilian subordinates. These turbulent relationships shaped the functioning of the entire unit, and so I became interested in studying this dynamic.

Throughout this paper I use the prepositions "he" and "him" in reference to both the subjects of the research (who are all men) and in reference to hypothetical, generic genius to key-subordinate relationships. These prepositions are used only for consistency and clarity's sake and are certainly not meant to imply any favoritism or bias against women.
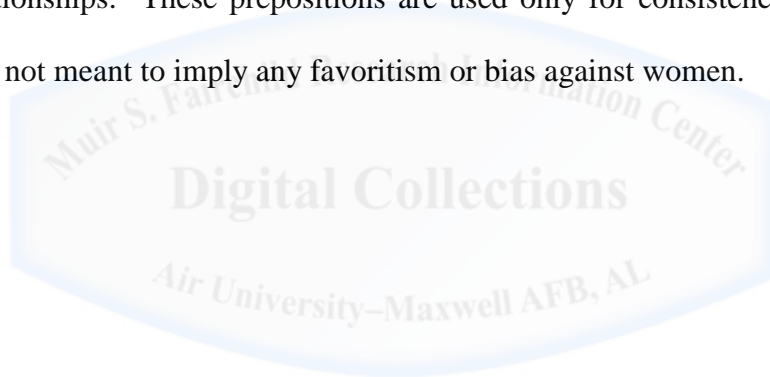
# ABSTRACT

The great military geniuses have defined and shaped history for millennia by exploiting their uncanny understanding of military affairs. Unlike scientific geniuses, though, military geniuses must have their vision implemented by large numbers of normal people. In many cases, a critical key-subordinate has significantly enabled and enhanced this link between the genius and his troops. The most productive genius to key subordinate relationships include five factors: trust, translation, subordinate leadership and staff skills, loyalty, and meshing personalities. This research explores famous genius to key-subordinate relationships and analyses the presence or absence of these factors. The research, in the end, contains applicable lessons for a large number of leader to subordinate relationships throughout the sphere of military affairs.
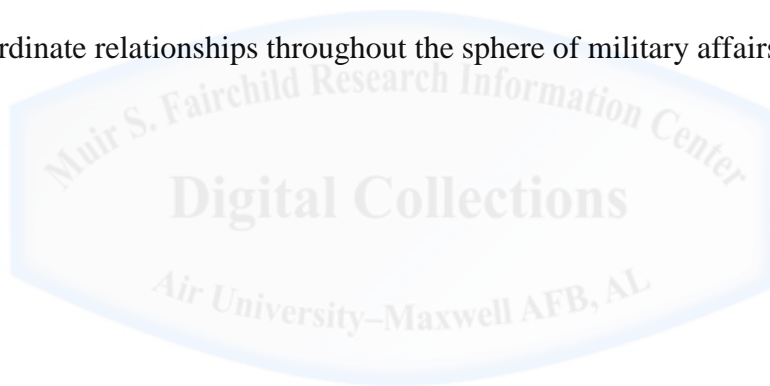
# TRANSLATING GENIUS

## Introduction

For many people, the study of military history is synonymous with, and organized by, the exploits of the great military geniuses. Throughout the ages, names like Alexander, Napoleon, and Patton seem to occupy a space of reverence and respect far above that of normal mortals. They are the few men who so dominated the battlefield that they have come to be archetypes of personality and to even define entire ages of warfare. Brash, aggressive commanders can be described as "Pattonesque" and an entire century of warfare is known as "Napoleonic." Multiple cities and even a large number of our children (including one of the main subjects of this study) are named in memory of the exploits of Alexander. How is it that from warfare, which by its very nature involves large numbers of people working as teams, not individuals, these few geniuses have surfaced to the level of icons, universally acknowledged geniuses, or even gods? Is it possible that the key to this success lies completely and totally in the hearts and minds of the great men, and their light burns so bright that their vision and will is single-handedly imposed upon their enemies? Or is there something more? What separates the world-renowned geniuses from all the brilliant minds that have faded to obscurity, or worse, met defeat despite their extraordinary potential?

The answer lies in the nature of military activity. In its essence, military activity involves the organization and direction of people, often huge masses of people. Although military geniuses undeniably exist, it is unreasonable to assume that a single person of vision can simultaneously conceive and execute a grand strategy while explaining and organizing the

volume and complexity of detail to actually implement war. Exploring this truth reveals the fact that, throughout history, a key-subordinate has enabled nearly all of the military geniuses that achieve disproportionate success and thus rise to fame and lasting glory. Often a chief of staff, this subordinate invariably provides some combination of an intellectual foil, a source of protection and counsel, and/or an ability to turn the genius' vision into real military operations.

At first glance, it may seem that all this relationship amounts to is the normal relationship a subordinate is supposed to have with a commander. In truth, it is much more. The key-subordinate required for this role cannot be a cookie-cutter officer assigned by bureaucratic process to a chief of staff billet. The nature of the relationship is far too subtle and demanding for that. Indeed, the person required for the key-subordinate role may be as rare and special as the genius himself! Furthermore, the man Napoleon needed would not have been the man Patton or Grant needed, not by any means. Although the relationships shared common aspects, the men themselves are uniquely suited to their commander.

With this truth in mind, an exploration of the genius to key-subordinate relationship reveals that there are a few invariably common traits of the relationship that enable success. The pairs studied execute these traits in sometimes very different ways, but the dynamics of some or all of the traits always exist. Interestingly, after much research and categorization of available data, a number of relationship characteristics that might logically apply turned out to be unimportant to the success of the relationship, including the patience, modesty, and flexibility of the key-subordinate. Although certainly valuable traits, they are not controlling functions for the success of the genius to key-subordinate relationship. Five characteristics of the relationship do emerge as the controlling factors. Each genius to key-subordinate is generally more successful according to the quality and number of five factors:

1. The genius trusts and empowers the key-subordinate.

2. The key-subordinate possesses the ability to translate the genius's vision into action.

3. The key-subordinate possesses the traits of a good staff officer and is an effective leader in his own right.

4. The key-subordinate must be consummately loyal to the genius, and protect him up and down the chain of command.

5. The key-subordinate exhibits personality aspects that reinforce positive, and/or make up for negative, aspects of the genius's personality.

A number of cases in history display the genius to key-subordinate relationship. Six are studied here, but the selection is primarily subjective and is not comprehensive. The cases are limited primarily to those in which the commander or leader is fairly universally considered to be one of the great geniuses of military history, although sometimes for various reasons. The six pairs addressed are:

1. Alexander the Great / Parmenio

2. George Washington / Nathanael Greene

3. Napoleon Bonaparte / Alexandre Berthier

4. Ulysses S. Grant / John Rawlins

5. Dwight Eisenhower / Walter Bedell Smith

6. Bernard Montgomery / Francis de Guingand

Additionally, the relationships between Robert E. Lee and Walter Taylor; and George Patton and Hobart Gay, are explored because these relationships displayed fewer of the important characteristics, and there is information to be learned by this.

These criteria for selecting these case studies may be controversial as they include some leaders whose genius may be debatable, and certainly leaves some universally acknowledged geniuses out. It also focuses on geniuses in the Western tradition, leaving out many of great Chinese, Mongolian, and Japanese greats, primarily because of difficulties in source material. The research explores the nature of genius somewhat, but does not attempt to define it and then exhaustively select military leaders from history that fit the definition. The research, instead, focuses on a few examples from which information is readily available and best describe the hypothesis. Similarly, an exhaustive survey of the negative or counter examples is out of scope of this research, primarily because examples are hard to find. Naturally, unsuccessful leaders, no matter how much of genius they might be, are invariably less well researched and documented (or remembered at all).

## The Nature of Genius

This research rests on the premise that military geniuses exist in the first place, and that there is something about genius that requires enhancement and translation. Unfortunately, to some extent, this first part of this premise is one we have to accept without absolute proof. Genius is problematic to define and is even harder to quantify. That said, we all seem to understand what Genius means and seem to accept the idea that people exist who are uniquely attuned to success in certain exploits, military activity being just one. We also all seem to know that these geniuses seem to be quirky, enigmatic, and often have extremes of personality. More descriptively, "Genius is a fire that burns without limits, not a tranquil source, but a flurious torrent, because an overflowing enthusiasm animates it."[1] Voltaire's description of Shakespeare provides a glimpse into the other aspect of genius: "[Shakespeare] was 'a genius full of force and fecundity,' but he lacked the 'slightest spark of good taste and the least knowledge of the

rules.'"[2]  These commonly accepted conventional wisdoms aren't proof of genius or its associated quirks, but they are familiar and descriptive to most of us.  Indeed, the term genius is not well understood and is often used to describe people that are just smart, just good at something, or even sometimes as a derogatory, sarcastic term – "Nice job, genius!"  Nevertheless, this research accepts the premise, based in the aforementioned summary of conventional wisdom, that military geniuses do occur, are rare, and exhibit idiosyncrasies and extremes of personality.  This research does not set out to prove this premise, but merely is a practical survey of the methods that key-subordinates have enabled people with these genius characteristics to succeed and shape military history in the process.  The lessons and conclusions of the research carry weight whether or not you accept the premise of genius, as long as you can accept that there are disproportionately influential military leaders, throughout history, who are uniquely gifted in military activity and have distinct personalities.  This research intends only to test the theory that these individuals are enabled by a relationship with a key-subordinate, and that this sort of relationship is necessary and critical to success.  For the sake of brevity and clarity, I call them military geniuses.

The argument that these geniuses only obtain success proportionate to their gifts through a key-subordinate is not, however, widely recognized.  Certainly, as is to be expected, the historical focus is on the leaders themselves, which is understandable due to their genius, position, and personality.  Furthermore, by definition these leaders have many subordinates so it can be problematic to search for the "one" who makes the difference, especially when the geniuses themselves are so personality driven, the spotlight has a hard time shining anywhere else.  Finally, it is often thought that these geniuses could succeed, by virtue of their immense talent, regardless of who their subordinates are.  I will attempt to show otherwise, but that said,

there is a fundamental truth about the genius to key-subordinate relationship that does reinforce the focus on the leader. This truth is that, although (I will argue) the leader would be less successful without the subordinate, it is also true that the subordinate could certainly not achieve success without the leader. The subordinate is an enabler for the genius, not the reverse.

This symbiotic, but highly directional, relationship is often defined, then, by the personality of the genius. Anyone who has studies Patton or Napoleon knows that the personality of the genius is often oversized and hard to contain. The brilliance and idiosyncrasies of genius may in fact be linked, or perhaps cause one another: "The same boldness and originality that led them to challenge conventional thinking in art and science might entail a broader rebelliousness against established authorities of all kinds."[3] Napoleon, descriptively, was, "first and foremost, a supreme egoist; and his egoism was combined with a phenomenal ability and singleness of purpose which, devoid of all scruple, inevitably swept all before it."[4] Even the quieter geniuses, Eisenhower and Lee are good examples, have personality aspects that are often out-of-scale with what may be considered normal. These extremes of personality often contribute to the inspirational capabilities of some of these military geniuses, but also place a severe burden on the staff officers more closely associated with the leader. The ability of the key-subordinate to absorb, deflect, and focus the personality traits of the genius becomes critical to success, sometimes without the genius ever understanding that it is going on. I will examine this characteristic in detail later, but it is important to understand that the peculiarities of the genius make their dependence on a key-subordinate much more critical than a "normal" commander's dependence on a "normal" chief of staff. In fact, the same personality traits that make the famous leaders of history so memorable and successful could have, in the absence of the right filter provided by the key-subordinate, caused utter ruin. This binary nature of the effect of

personality – it either is a catalyst for great success or the source of disaster – is critical to grasping the asymmetric effect that a key-subordinate can have in these situations.

This is all an important distinction that must be reinforced early in this research – the key-subordinate relationship is asymmetrically important to the success or failure of the military genius. The genius, operating on such a high plane of vision, and often convinced of his own superb qualities (or, in Alexander's case, deism) by a number of self-reinforcing situations and public adulation, often displays personality traits that are highly charged or extreme.[5] The key-subordinate must manage and filter these traits to enable success. If not, these quirks can spell ruin, either in direct military action or in ancillary activity. Patton's slapping incidents show this in stark relief – with no chance for intervention, his extreme personality, reinforced over the years, ended up limiting his usefulness to the Allies.[6] All of this addresses the reasonable argument a capable chief of staff enables and strengthens any military organization and leader. This is certainly true, especially as military operations are ever increasingly complex and staffs invariably grow. However, the difference is that the function and effectiveness of these "average" military organizations is not nearly so asymmetrically dependent upon a single relationship. Commanders and chiefs of staff flow in and out of organizations all the time, and this people, personalities, and relationships certainly have effects. But in general, the effectiveness of the organizations never hinge completely on these relationships, to the extremes of success and failure, as they do with the genius to key-subordinate relationship.

## The Geniuses and their Key-subordinates

The successful military genius to key-subordinate relationship is complicated, to say the least, because of both the uniqueness of the geniuses themselves as well as the complexity of large scale military campaigns. Through history, though, a few characteristics of the relationship

stand out as the most important to enable success.  These characteristics emerged through research on eight genius to key-subordinate relationships from antiquity through WWII.  As mentioned before, the relationships studied are not exhaustive, and certain military geniuses are left out of the analysis.  This is either due to availability of information about key-subordinates, especially a problem for some the older great captains (Hannibal and Genghis Khan, for example), or just because of the scope of this research had to cull some possible examples (Frederick the Great, Caesar, and others are probably good places to look for follow-on work).

The six examples that are studied in-depth represent a cross-section of epochs, personality types, different aspects of the genius to key-subordinate relationship, and demonstrate some contrasts of all of the above.  A brief description of each case is warranted before delving into the important characteristics of the relationship.

Alexander the Great is certainly widely recognized as a military genius, as he conquered much of the known world before he even turned thirty-five.[7]  Less well known is his great, older captain, Parmenio.  Although direct information is scarce, and always supplied as supporting information to describe Alexander's exploits, there are enough references and examples to demonstrate the importance of Parmenio to Alexander in both military and political matters.  As Alexander grew in stature, he began to literally see himself as a god, and as his personality grew, so did the importance of the key-subordinate's relationship with him.[8]  Furthermore, the beginnings of Alexander's decline correlates to Parmenio's death (at Alexander's order, as a matter of fact).[9]

In American society, certainly, George Washington's genius is well known and accepted almost as a matter of faith.  He is not, however, generally associated with strange or difficult personality traits.  In fact, though, he was stubborn and quirky in his own ways, and as he led the

fledging American army, often came close to disaster.[10] In several notable and critical cases, he relied on his trusted general, quartermaster, and confidant Nathanael Greene for much of the Revolution to manage aspects of the war from the mundane but critical matters of supply to entire campaigns.[11]

One of the original impetuses for this research, and perhaps the best, most illuminating example of the military genius to key-subordinate relationship is that of Napoleon Bonaparte and his great chief-of-staff, Alexandre Berthier. This relationship involves not only perhaps the most clear-cut and widely accepted case of military genius in Napoleon, but also some of the best documented cases of all five key characteristics of the key-subordinate relationship. Furthermore, the Napoleon-Berthier case provides a clear-cut counter-example that superbly demonstrates the importance of the relationship: "Whether Napoleon commanded five divisions as in 1796 or forty-one divisions as in 1812, his staff never failed him—so long as Berthier was at its head. It was only at Waterloo, after Berthier's tragic death, that the staff no-longer constituted an effective fly-wheel to its commander's driving force, and Napoleon was moved to exclaim in sad frustration, 'If only my poor Berthier were here!'"[12] This paper will explore this relationship, in particular, in some detail.

Ulysses S. Grant's long-time confident and aide, John Rawlins, saved Grant largely from himself on multiple occasions, and, perhaps counterintuitively to the conventional wisdom of genius' personality in this case, provided the foil to Grant's extremely calm personality with fire and anger.[13] Grant's case also provides an interesting counter-example, as Rawlins was unavailable to save Grant from his weaknesses during Grant's presidency.

Finally, two of the most famous World War II commanders and their key-subordinates display the required relationship very clearly. Eisenhower and Montgomery were, of course,

very different, geniuses in their own ways, and continued mightily to Allied success. They exhibited quite different extremes of personality, and required key-subordinates in Bedell Smith and de Guingand that were also very different personalities, but also very similar in some ways.

Eisenhower is, arguably, the least archetypal of the military genius. Generally calm, logical, and a great organizer and diplomat, Ike was distinctly enabled by the bulldog-smart, intense, yet political Walter Bedell-Smith.[14] As one of the most archetypal chiefs-of-staff ever, Bedell Smith was the glue that held SHAEF together throughout the war and freed up Eisenhower to concentrate on strategy and operations.[15]

Other than Napoleon and Berthier, Montgomery's relationship to his chief-of-staff throughout the war, General "Freddie" de Guingand best exemplifies the necessity of the key relationship. De Guingand compensated expertly for Montgomery in multiple different ways, through a truly opposite personality, and, in one case at least, probably saved Montgomery from firing and rescued the delicate balance of the Allied relationship in the process.[16] Montgomery owes much of his success to Freddie's ability to translate his vision, smooth feathers, and enable his boss's strengths. Montgomery was, in many ways, the classic military genius, especially as he become more enamored with himself, but fortunately his relationship with de Guingand exhibited all of the five characteristics, and kept Montgomery, and England, in the war and fighting, and ultimately successful.[17]

These six relationships, as we will see, illustrate the range, depth, and different manifestations of the genius to key-subordinate relationship. The actual personalities of the actors and the qualities of the traits differ greatly, but there is distinct commonality when viewed from the perspective of the broad nature of the relationships. Every relationship studied does not have all five important characteristics, and the effect of this on the outcome of the relationship is

significant.  In the case of the two "best" examples: Napoleon / Berthier and Montgomery / de Guingand, all five characteristics existed and the results are the most striking.

## The Characteristics of the Genius to Key-Subordinate Relationship

**Trust and Empowerment**

The characteristics of the genius to key-subordinate relationship are not all equal.  In fact, the first characteristic, trust and empowerment, is the most critical.  Without this characteristic, none of the others, even if all present, will produce a successful relationship.  This truth stems from the direction of this characteristic – it flows from the leader to the subordinate.  The genius must implicitly trust, and directly empower, the key-subordinate to make the relationship productive.  This is obvious, to be sure, but it is also hard to come by, especially in the case of the genius personality, which is often, by its nature, "At odds with the world."[18]  Often, the military genius has such an extreme personality, usually with a component of egotism, that it may hard for them to truly trust a subordinate with enough responsibility that the subordinate actually has enough power to make a difference.  In the extreme, like Alexander before he killed his own most loyal and capable supporter, the genius can become so enamored of himself and his legacy that this characteristic becomes the hardest to maintain.[19]  Without this sort of trust, though, all of the other characteristics, which are actually more about the subordinate, are meaningless.  It is easy to see that a subordinate who has the ability to translate a genius's vision, possesses good staff skills, and is loyal still can't do a whole lot of good, and enable the genius to be successful, unless the genius trusts and empowers him appropriately.

In the six examples of the genius to key-subordinate relationships studied here, all have a significant degree of the trust and empowerment characteristic.  This is unsurprising, of course, given how important this characteristic is.   The effect of the genius to key-subordinate

relationship is not the proven to be the cause of success, by any means, but there is correlation. The circumstantial evidence suggests, then, that the more trust and empowerment exists, the higher functioning the genius to key-subordinate relationship will be. This higher function can limit the effect of negative personality quirks, create efficiency and higher functioning staff work, and ultimately be a catalyst for success.

Looking closer at Napoleon and Berthier, many may be surprised at just how much Napoleon trusted Berthier and how much power he delegated to him. Throughout Napoleon's campaigning in Italy, North Africa, and Austria/Prussia, Berthier was consistently trusted and empowered with tasks of enormous importance.[20]  This trust ranged from commanding troops in battle, commanding the army itself (especially when Napoleon was back in Paris), helping Napoleon arrange battles, to administering conquered cities in Italy.[21]  In one telling example Napoleon, the great military genius, asks Berthier, "'Cousin, I believe I have not forgotten anything… If I should by any chance have forgotten anything and left any divisions or battalions behind, send me a list of them again.'"[22]  The humanity and humility shown by this simple exchange provides a window into the depth of trust necessary to enable a productive relationship. As we will see later, the true strengths of Napoleon and Berthier's partnership lay in Berthier's ability to translate Napoleon's orders and in Berthier's staff skills, but none of these would have mattered without the very basic, deep trust that Napoleon placed in Berthier, and perhaps no one else.  The key component of this trust was Napoleon's willingness to free Berthier to run the staff… Napoleon was, in the unique case of Berthier at least, not a micromanager.  In fact, Berthier was given "a free hand in the organization of the general staff, in the preparation and transmission of orders, and in the establishment of communications: it was thanks to Berthier's admirable system that Bonaparte was kept in touch with every part of his command."[23]

Napoleon's trust his chief of staff provides an interesting perspective on his legacy: only through his release of ego and willingness to put the fate of his armies in another man's hand was Napoleon able to achieve his success and everlasting fame. It is an important lesson for those who may fall into the trap of believing themselves invincible.

Alexander the Great is a prime example of a military genius who fell into this trap. Interestingly, as history shows us that he gradually came to believe (literally) that he was a god, he was less able or willing to trust his great general, Parmenio. In the early years of Alexander's remarkable campaigns, however, Parmenio was responsible for a huge portion of Alexander's success, and was trusted to carry out much of the real work of the conquests while Alexander sought glory. A good illustration is Alexander's initial crossing of the Hellespont into present-day Turkey, in which Parmenio managed all the logistics of the maneuver while Alexander "undertook a detour which was of great propaganda value."[24] Throughout Alexander's conquest of Persia, we see him dispatch Parmenio to campaign on separate axes from Alexander numerous times, and to great effect.[25] Most famously, Parmenio commanded Alexander's flanking armies during the major battles of Issus and Gaugamela, where Parmenio's "'advice prevailed'" in recommending a key reconnaissance[26] Alexander's willingness to turn over large operations to Parmenio, with the trust that they would succeed, very much enabled Alexander's early successes by allowing Alexander to open important second fronts, attack on multiple flanks, and generally take advantage of the much older Parmenio's experience. Unfortunately, as Alexander dominated more and more areas of the known world, he came to rely less and less on Parmenio's abilities and advice, arguably contributing to the poor planning that led to the collapse of his empire.[27]

Washington achieved success through a similar type of relationship with Nathanael Greene, although the particulars of their personalities were much different. Like Alexander trusted Parmenio, Washington trusted Greene to handle many of the logistical details of running the Army as quartermaster, as well as trusting him to execute some of the major, secondary campaigns of the war.[28] Washington also trusted Greene to represent him in the halls of the congress, which was very much involved in the day to day decisions of the continental Army because Greene "'is so much in my confidence, so intimately acquainted with my ideas.'"[29] Later, after two generals had failed him, Washington entrusted Greene to command the southern Army, which in concert with Washington's army in the North, won key victories leading to ultimate victory at Yorktown.[30] Washington's trust in Greene brought Washington freedom to act in many dimensions – logistically, politically, and militarily. Although Greene was not a chief of staff and their relationship did not have some of the other important characteristics of the genius – key-subordinate relationship, Washington's implicit trust in Greene throughout the war paid huge dividends for the fledgling United States.

The US Civil War brings fewer concrete examples of military geniuses significantly trusting a key-subordinate. Here a distinction must be drawn between a key-subordinate and a key sub-commander. Good corps commanders certainly existed in the Civil War: Johnston, Longstreet, Sherman, and Jackson all are good examples. The trust that is required of the genius to subordinate relationship, however, is not necessarily that a sub-commander will execute orders and achieve battle success. The required trust is more the trust that a key-subordinate will provide for the army, undertake administrative tasks with the genius's intent in mind, and provide critical advice at key times. Lee really didn't have anyone that fulfilled this role for him, Taylor was really just his adjutant, empowered mostly to "sign documents in [Lee's] name," and,

"delivery of crucial orders."[31]  Rawlins, however, was empowered to provide Grant military advice, and he served a more key protective role, but he did not execute major logistical or command endeavors.  Ultimately, neither Lee nor Grant had the Parmenio, Berthier, or Greene they so needed.  Still, Grant's trust in Rawlins paid huge dividends, mostly by providing the opening for Rawlins to execute some of the other relationship characteristics described later, by virtue that he could "argue, could expostulate, could condemn, could even upbraid, without interrupting for an hour the fraternal confidence and good will of Grant."[32]

In World War two, we see a culmination of the genius to key-subordinate relationship with Eisenhower and Montgomery.  Their success owes a great deal to both Bedell Smith and de Guingand, whom they each trusted implicitly.

Eisenhower's chief of staff, Bedell Smith, was trusted throughout the war not just to handle the overwhelming staff work required of the Allied Supreme Command, but also to negotiate with other nations and the myriad headquarters and authorities with interest in the war.[33]  Smith described his view of the nature of his administrative work that clearly illustrates the value he provided to Ike: "[The staff's] ultimate purpose is to free the commander from countless details of administration and organization and thus leave his mind clear to consider only the great purpose which he has been designated to carry out and to make the major decisions which he alone can make."[34]  Smith role in dealing with other headquarters is less well known, but one of his key contributions was his "advice to Eisenhower on how to deal effectively with the array of higher authorities."[35]  Eisenhower's trust in Smith is summarized well in Snyder's biographical article:

> As chief of staff Smith, probably better than anyone except the Supreme Commander, understood the activities and problem of AFHQ and SHAEF. He was the Senior American officer on the staff; he also enjoyed General Eisenhower's complete confidence. It is hardly surprising, then, that Smith often

acted as Eisenhower's confidential representative. Following the North African invasion, for example, Eisenhower asked Smith, who had remained in London, to explain to the Prime Minister the controversial negotiations then in progress with French officials in Algiers. Later Smith went to Washington and won Roosevelt's backing on the same issue.[36]

This summary sums up the level of trust Eisenhower placed in his chief of staff: representing him at major conferences, etcetera. Eisenhower's trust in Smith opened the door to Smith's contributions in staff work, translating Ike's orders, and the other critical characteristics of the genius to key-subordinate relationship.

Similarly, Montgomery placed a tremendous amount of trust in his chief of staff, "Freddie" de Guingand, on multiple levels. Monty also had de Guingand represent him at critical strategic conferences, such as presenting the secret plans for the Sicily Invasion to the Allies, and to "effect the maximum degree of coordination."[37] More than this though, from Africa to Italy to Northern Europe, de Guingand was trusted to maintain the relationships necessary to integrate Montgomery into the Allied command structure while freeing Montgomery to lead and inspire his troops.[38] It is much to Montgomery's credit, and illustrative of the necessity of the genius to key-subordinate relationship, that Monty was able to check his ego and trust de Guingand to handle such an important part of his command.

These examples illustrate the types and levels of trust geniuses place in their key-subordinates, and some of the positive and negative effects of that trust (or lack of it). The most important thing to understand with trust, however, is that it is the gateway and catalyst to the more concrete benefits that are possible with a strong genius to key-subordinate relationship. If trusted, the key-subordinate can begin to enable the genius' success by translating his vision, leading the staff, demonstrating his loyalty, and complementing the genius's personality. Without trust, even if the key-subordinate has all of these other characteristics, the relationship

will not produce positive effects.  The decision to place trust is solely on the genius's shoulders.  The successful geniuses set aside (some) of their ego to capitalize on the relationship by trusting a right-hand man, and achieve spectacular results when they do so.

**The Ability to Translate Genius**

Once trusted, perhaps the most important service the key-subordinate can provide to his genius is the ability to translate the genius's vision into things that actual people in an actual military can do.  This trait makes intuitive sense, especially for anyone who has heard some sort of academic or scientific genius who is unable to "dumb down" a topic to something an average person can understand.  Truth be told, not everyone in the military is a genius of military affairs, and there is so much activity and so much complexity inherent in military activity, that sometimes the genius is simply unable to spend time and energy trying to reduce their visions and strategy to a common level.  Having someone to do this, though, is critical because all of the stratagems and maneuvers of a military genius, in contrast to a scientific genius, must be executed by (lots of) normal, real people.  Some geniuses need this more than others, and this depends on their personality and scope of responsibility.    Many geniuses, of course, enamored with their own capabilities, never conceive that they might need this service, which of course limits the usefulness of the relationship as well.

Of the six relationships studied in this paper, three exhibit high levels of this characteristic: Napoleon/Berthier, Eisenhower/Smith, and Montgomery/de Guingand.  There is little record of Parmenio translating Alexander's action into useful tasks, although in this case, the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.  The ancient historical accounts, so focused on Alexander himself, do not show this dynamic taking place, but remember that Plutarch and the other biographers largely traveled with and focused on Alexander, and Alexander may very well have

controlled some of the reporting on Parmenio, especially after he had Parmenio executed.[39]  In

the case of Washington and Greene, however, there is also little record of this kind of service,

and this is likely because a significant measure of Washington's genius was in his democratic

approach to strategy, where decisions were made in war-councils, and he didn't necessarily

require this kind of support from Greene.[40]  Grant is a different matter.  He also didn't receive a

lot of this translation support from Rawlins, their relationship was much heavier in some of the

other traits.  In this case, perhaps he could have benefitted from more translation, but in general

Grant's genius lay in his military understanding of the situation of the civil war and that it

required more determination and tenacity rather than complicated stratagems, so their wasn't as

much translating to do.

Delving deeper into the three relationships that possess this trait, the relationship between

Napoleon and Berthier exemplifies the translation dynamic between the genius and his key-

subordinate.  Napoleon had such huge armies (for the time) engaged in such complicated

maneuvers over vast distances with rudimentary communications structures, it is really a wonder

that he was able to implement his military vision at all.  The fact that he was able to, while

simultaneously running a country and engaging in all sorts of political intrigue, was largely

because Berthier was so skilled at understanding his vision and turning it into digestible,

actionable orders.[41]  This description from Berthier's biography sums it up well: "Bonaparte

made the commander's decision and decided the concept of his operations; while Berthier

unfailingly provided the information on which the decisions were based, and he then compiled,

transmitted, and supervised the execution of the detailed orders for their implementation."[42]

More specifically, "The emperor's first care was invariably to dictate a directive to his chief of

staff, giving in outline *who* was to do *what*, and *when*: he often omitted to specify exactly how

and why his orders were to be executed, because Berthier had usually been present during the planning stage and was fully acquainted with his process of thought."[43]  These summaries show us the key aspects of translation dynamic between Napoleon and Berthier.  Berthier was incredibly skilled at reducing and synthesizing Napoleon's broad directives into the actual orders for the various units.  More than this, though, Berthier was also perfectly matched to Napoleon, and was, in General Thiebault's words, able "'to understand him instantly and to foresee what he would need,'" so much so that he could read between the lines and fill in the blanks of Napoleon's direction and create actionable instructions that guaranteed that the *Grand Armee* would execute Napoleon's vision.[44]  Time and again Berthier worked tirelessly to guarantee success in Napoleon's vision, and it was Berthier who actually translated the great military geniuses' vision into reality.

Eisenhower's relationship with Bedell Smith was similar, both in the nature of the relationship but also the sheer vastness of the enterprise and the need to execute such a grand military vision by creating actionable work for many smaller units.  Bedell Smith added another dimension to his translation repertoire, however, as he was one of Eisenhower's key emissaries back to Washington and among the other headquarters staffs around the theater.[45]  Beetle, as he was called, represented Eisenhower at all manner of summits, planning sessions, and diplomatic affairs, consistently representing Eisenhower's vision and maintain SHAEF's control and influence over the military situation.[46]  Snyder summarized Smith's translating ability, and its importance, in his biographical article in *Military Affairs*:

> AFHQ and SHAEF had legal authority over the operational activities of the national forces assigned to these commands.  But Smith recognized that Eisenhower's actual authority, and that of the headquarters, depended critically on developing consensus on operational matters.  Extensive consultation was needed, as was a sensitivity to often different national perspectives.  Still, disagreement and misunderstandings were certain to arise; Smith believed these could best be

ironed out informally.  Consequently, he set out to establish such channels – primarily with subordinate units, but also with the War Department and the British War Office.  Smith deliberately worked to develop a strong personal relationship with his counterparts at these headquarters.  He paid special attention to their requests for assistance.  He flattered their achievements.  He showered them with personal favors.[47]

In a nutshell, as General Marshall said, Smith "Did the dirty work for Eisenhower" by cultivating the necessary relationships with which he could promulgate and translate Eisenhower's vision to get the action he needed.[48]  Smith largely facilitated the success of the Allies in Europe, which was so dependent on so many various staffs working together towards Eisenhower's overall vision.

In the same war and in much the same way, Freddie de Guingand did a great deal of work translating for his boss, Field Marshal Montgomery.  To an even greater extent than Smith, de Guingand spent a lot of time and effort translating Montgomery's vision upward and laterally to the different leaders and staffs in the theater.[49]  Monty always did a good job motivating and leading his troops, but Monty's genius was clearly not in his relationships with other commanders.  De Guingand, however, "In his contacts with American allies and to a lesser extent with the Canadians and subsequently French, Belgians, and Dutch, [he] was remarkable effective in translating Montgomery's decisive commands into a diplomatic form which was immediately acceptable."[50]  This is a good example of how the genius, so single mindedly focused on the objective, and the only one with the clear vision of how to achieve the objective, still needed significant help in turning that vision into something palatable by the huge number of "normal" people needed to actually execute a war.  Indeed, de Guingand was "particularly successful with Eisenhower, Bedell Smith, and Bradley who all had great confidence in him, and

admired the way in which he smoothed out the rough edges created by Montgomery's single minded pursuit of military policies regardless of their political ramifications."[51]

The benefit of the key-subordinate's ability to translate their genius' vision is clear in these three relationships. To a significant degree, neither Napoleon, Eisenhower, nor Montgomery would have been nearly as successful without their translators. This takes nothing away from these geniuses. In fact, one of their great strengths was recognizing the different sorts of translating they needed to be effective, whether it be creating actionable orders, representing command authority, or smoothing over key leadership relationships, and selecting just the right men for the job.

**Staff Officer Skills and Leadership**

Another common characteristic of the key-subordinates to the great geniuses is that they all possess highly developed staff officer skills and leadership traits in their own right. This characteristic is perhaps the least surprising of the list, as it makes sense that the people in such key positions ought to be extremely competent. As with the other traits, though, the most successful geniuses have key-subordinates whose leadership and staff strengths are remarkably tailored to the needs of their particular genius, and their leadership and staff work invariably represents the intent of the genius. Five of the six relationships show a great deal of this dynamic, with Rawlins being the only exception. This isn't to say that Rawlins wasn't a competent staff officer or leader, only that his contributions in these areas weren't exceptional… his relationship with Grant was different.

Parmenio exemplifies the leadership half of this trait: he was a remarkable commander and war leader. Parmenio came to Alexander as a remarkably accomplished general from Philip of Macedon's reign.[52] Parmenio recommended the remarkable flanking maneuver and commanded

the critical flank attack in the great battle of Granicus.[53] There are numerous examples of Parmenio engaging in independent campaigns, especially in current-day Turkey.[54] In all of these cases, mostly early in Alexander's career, Parmenio's experience, leadership, and competence were critically important in securing Alexander's gains. These campaigns formed Alexander's legend, they established him as a great commander instead of just another hopeful. It was Parmenio's capacity for independent leadership that made it possible.

Nathanial Greene performed a similar role for Washington, who relied on Greene to independently lead key parts of the Revolutionary army much more than provide staff work. Greene's greatest contributions came as Quartermaster General in the key periods when the Revolution hung in the balance of supply. In many instances, Greene's leadership and determination was instrumental to the success of the army, primarily by generating, positioning, and distributing the extremely scarce supplies necessary to fight.[55] An instructive example occurred during one of the New Jersey campaigns, when Greene had the foresight to pre-position supplies along a potential retreat route, which later became critical to feeding the army: "This was precisely the kind of foresight and organization that so impressed Washington."[56] Greene's contribution to the success of Washington's army was best summarized by Washington himself, in a letter to Greene upon his retirement from Quartermaster General: "You have conducted the various duties of it with capacity and diligence, entirely to my satisfaction… When you were prevailed to undertake the office… it was in great disorder and confusion, and by extraordinary exertions you so arranged it as to enable the army to take the files the moment it was necessary, and to move with rapidity after the enemy…"[57] Greene, then, is a case where Washington's military genius didn't necessarily require translation of intent, but desperately needed the detail and logistical support of a truly organized subordinate leader. Later, Greene served as a classic

military leader in his own right, commanding the southern army that eventually brought Cornwallis north to surrender at Yorktown.[58]  In these two ways, Greene's leadership was exactly what Washington needed.  Anyone who knows the story of Valley Forge knows how dire the supply situation during the revolution was.[59]  Greene literally saved the army from extinction, commanded the critical southern flank where others had failed, and truly made Washington's military genius a reality.[60]

In Berthier, Napoleon also had a great leader, but his leadership was much more associated with his ability to lead a staff itself.  Perhaps history's quintessential chief of staff, Berthier was truly an expert at conducting staff work and also leading the members of his staff.[61]  Berthier simultaneously showed "meticulous efficiency and prodigious capacity for work that made him indispensable and irreplaceable"[62] while also displaying "humanity that inspired his staff to continue to serve him year after year with unremitting devotion."[63]  Berthier consistently took care of his staff and fostered great loyalty among them.  In contrast to many of Napoleon's other Marshalls, "in addition to being good, Berthier possessed the equally indispensable virtue of being consistent."[64]  This unique blend of superior staff skills and personal leadership is what made Berthier so capable, and the perfect foil to Napoleon.  It is always interesting to compare an organization with and without its leader, and upon his return from an extended sickness, "he reappeared, albeit a little shakily, in his office, where his faithful staff welcomed him with undisguised relief; and without delay he set about gathering the threads of the strategic web that the emperor had been weaving in his absence."[65]  This is a remarkable summary of the marriage of his contribution in staff work and leadership, hinting at both his the effect of his leadership on his staff and the way in which he immediately set about to understand Napoleon's vision and turn it into action.

The two World War Two key-subordinates, Bedell Smith and de Guingand, were similarly effective in their chief of staff roles. In both cases, they expertly saw to the daily organization and tasking required to plan and execute such remarkably large military operations as occurred in the European theater. Their expertise and ability in staff work freed their leaders to lead, inspire, plan, and negotiate the arrangements necessary for success. Bedell, with his "quick, incisive mind... seldom missed the crucial points at issue. He was also a persuasive speaker – organized, convincing, and forceful."[66] De Guingand, similarly "coordinated a vast range of detailed preparations in a period of time that was dangerously short, relieving his chief completely of that burden, and his releasing him for the duty which alone he could perform – the motivation of his commanders and soldiers he was to lead into battle."[67] It is, of course, possible to argue here that Smith and de Guingand were simply performing the duties a chief of staff is supposed to perform. While true, they were both absolutely exceptional at it, and they did so in perfect harmony with their genius commander. This is a rare confluence, a special characteristic of the relationship that is critical to the ultimate success of the genius.

**Loyalty and Protection**

Loyalty is a characteristic common to every successful genius to key-subordinate relationship, and of all the characteristics, loyalty is perhaps the one that seems the most common. This is largely because famous leaders are known for surrounding themselves with loyal people, often to their detriment. Interestingly, blind loyalty is exactly not the kind of loyalty important in these kinds of relationships. In all of the successful genius to key-subordinate relationships, instead, the loyalty is complete, but is not blind. The best subordinates are loyal in public and protect their genius up and down the chain, but at the same time are not at all "yes-men," and provide guidance and opposition frequently and without hesitation.

Parmenio's loyalty to Alexander was complete; he "seemed to have made a point of loyalty to the King throughout his career," all the way until the end, even when he was implicated and executed for suspicion of plotting to kill Alexander.[68] In the final analysis of this affair, "it seems fairly likely that the ever-loyal Parmenio was not [involved]. But from the remote elevation of his godlike rule Alexander could not discern the difference, or did not care."[69] This brings out an important point about the loyalty required in these relationships… the subordinate must stay loyal in spite of the idiosyncratic, even destructive personality flaws that the geniuses often have. We have earlier evidence that Parmenio often debated important points of strategy, even as important as whether Alexander ought to continue his conquests past Persia. In fact, Parmenio counseled Alexander to consolidate his gains at the Euphrates River and not push too far.[70] Alexander, of course, did no such thing, but in his conquests into Afghanistan and India lost control over his holdings, ultimately resulting in collapse of his empire soon after his death. If he had listened to Parmenio's wise (and brave) advice, perhaps his conquests would have been longer lasting.[71] Regardless, Parmenio consistently advised Alexander with wise counsel, and remained loyal to his decisions.

Ulysses S. Grant's relationship with John Rawlins was largely based on this loyalty characteristic, and Rawlins key role in his position as Grant's confidant was protecting Grant from himself. This dynamic is illustrative of the different kinds of service that the different kinds of geniuses need. Grant had many personality quirks, but they were altogether different than many of the other geniuses. He was quiet, reserved, apolitical, and far too trusting.[72] Rawlins worked tirelessly to protect Grant from rumors of drinking[73] and constantly battled and advised Grant in the toughest of times: "With perfect fearlessness and devotion, he was Grant's friend as well as his adjutant. With unfailing sagacity, he acted the part of mentor and counsellor

in all the great emergencies of his Chief's remarkable career."[74]   Rawlins' biographer does

justice to the importance of his ability to handle Grant's detractors, enabling Grant to focus on

military affairs:

> To Rawlins fidelity and fearlessness in friendship Grant owed more than to any or
> all the other extraneous influences, for without them and the support which
> Rawlins gave him with leading Congressmen and the representatives of the press,
> the work of the detractors must have been successful.  Had that support been
> withdrawn... [multiple campaigns], though Grant had the genius of a Napoleon
> and the fortitude of a Washington, his career must have come to an end.  Nothing
> could have saved him from the public clamor, had Rawlins lost faith in him, or in
> his real merit, at any of these important epochs of his great career.[75]

Rawlins loyalty to, and protection of, Grant was remarkable and once again shows how

important a dimension of genius is picking the right subordinate.

The four other genius to key-subordinate relationships all also contained a high degree of

loyalty, although it was not necessarily the defining feature of the relationship.  However,

Berthier, Greene, Bedell Smith, and de Guingand all added tremendous value to their individual

commander's success, and legends, through loyal service and wise counsel.  A few summaries

from their biographers summarize their contributions well.  For example: "Transcending all his

other qualities were Berthier's self-effacement and his loyalty.  While in private he was

Napoleon's confidant and often his outspoken advisor, he was always careful to appear as his

deferential servant in public."[76]   Similarly, "for all his devotion to Bonaparte, Berthier was

certainly not a 'yes-man,' and he deemed it an essential part of his loyalty to tell his chief the

truth however unpalatable."[77]   In fact, Berthier went so far as saving Napoleon from a suspected

assassination attempt, and stayed remarkably constant to Napoleon even as the emperor became

more and more self-involved and belligerent in his later campaigns.[78]   Greene often found

himself in the protector role, particularly when it came to defending Washington from congress,

a fact we don't realize much anymore through the lens of Washington's legend. In fact, "Washington, encircled by enemies even within the army itself, knew he had no more loyal general than Nathanael Greene, and surely none more capable of executing orders, no matter how distasteful."[79]

Bedell Smith, similarly, occupied a rarified position, critical to Eisenhower's success:

> Smith's final contribution -- and possibly his most important -- was the moral support he provided General Eisenhower throughout their service together. Military command, most observers agree, is a lonely and difficult business. Eisenhower exercised a command as complex and difficult as any in history. The Supreme Commander, moreover, almost daily faced several of the strongest political and military personalities of this century - Roosevelt, Churchill, De Gaulle, Montgomery, Patton, and Marshall. Smith provided the best possible support for General Eisenhower in his dealings with these men - superb staff work and totally frank advice on the one hand; on the other, absolute loyalty in defending and carrying out any decision made by the Supreme Commander.[80]

Finally, de Guingand's loyalty to, and protection of, Montgomery were so robust and unfailing that, in one instance, Freddie literally saved Monty's position and career at the height of the battle in Europe. Montgomery had long sought combined command of all land forces in Europe, in spite Eisenhower's arrangements to the contrary. This debate boiled over in conjunction with the crisis of the Battle of the Bulge, with Monty making some public statements on the matter that undermined Eisenhower's authority.[81] De Guingand was quick to recognize the severity of the situation, remarking that "I soon realized that an extremely dangerous situation had developed, and that unless something was done, and done quickly, a crisis would occur in the sphere of inter-allied relationships."[82] Freddie personally flew to visit Eisenhower on Montgomery's behalf without Montgomery even realizing the severity of the situation. De Guingand defended his boss, and promised the necessary contrition from Montgomery, which he later obtained when he convinced Monty to send a personal apology letter to Ike.[83] This

situation perfectly illustrates the loyalty and protection required from a key-subordinate. Montgomery, laser-focused on what he perceived to be a military necessity of combined command, only survived because de Guingand recognized that his genius needed protection and was loyal enough to risk personal intervention on Monty's behalf.

**Reinforcing and Countering Personalities**

The final characteristic is, perhaps, the most interesting because it is so specific to each genius to key-subordinate relationship. The importance of the interaction of the personalities cannot be overstated; it is the basis for the effectiveness of all the other traits. Each successful key-subordinate has personality traits that reinforce their genius, or counteract the personality traits of their genius in just the right ways. Of all the characteristics, this is the hardest to find and luck plays a significant role. In the final analysis, one of the greatest accomplishments of some of the geniuses in this study may be that the trusted, sought out, and relied on key-subordinates who were not just exactly like them, but challenged and countered them in important ways.

Unfortunately there is little record of Parmenio's personality characteristics, the evidence for a difference in style is largely circumstantial. Still, there are numerous incidences where Parmenio advised restraint and caution, in contrast to Alexander's more aggressive tendencies. An illustrative example occurred just after Alexander conquered Persepolis and burned a key local temple over the advice of Parmenio. The burning ended up causing significant backlash amongst the Persians, and weakened Alexander's position.[84] Unfortunately there are few examples where Alexander followed Parmenio's restraining advice, but given the length of time Parmenio served Alexander and the success they achieved, the circumstantial evidence certainly

suggests that Parmenio's experience and restraint likely contrasted, and benefitted, Alexander significantly.

More evidence exists for the personality dynamic between Washington and Greene. In this case, the major benefit to Washington, who was "not given to sentiment or emotion," was Green's penchant for passion and politics.[85] In multiple instances, Greene negotiated with congress to advance his commander's position.[86] Greene's passionate approach to his dealings with congress are also evident in his multiple attempts to resign over real or perceived insults in the positions offered to him.[87] In any case, the difference in personality and approach between Washington and Greene was obvious, and obviously worked. Throughout the war, despite numerous contentious issues concerning the conduct of the war, Washington and Greene maintained their relationship with congress well enough to see through to victory.

Little more needs to be said concerning Napoleon and Berthier, as the difference in their personalities has been well illustrated. Napoleon was temperamental and given to extreme obsessions[88] while Berthier was unselfish, understanding, modest, and unwaveringly loyal.[89] Their personalities perfectly complemented each other to achieve results. A well-known quote from Berthier illustrates this dynamic perfectly: "Berthier's assistant Denniee, after a stormy scene with Bonaparte, exclaimed with shocked amazement: 'Do you realize that this man has intolerable fits of temper?' 'You are right, my dear Denniee,' replied Berthier, 'But remember that one day it will be a fine thing to be second to that man.'"[90] This simple exchange shows both Napoleon's and Berthier's personalities well, and illustrates the power of the match.

One of the most powerful aspects of Grant's relationship with John Rawlins was the difference in their personalities. In contrast to most of the other classic military geniuses, in this case, "Grant's virtues—his reserve, his quiet determination, his courage in the face of

adversity—were all present in the shy, awkward, withdrawn child…even at the very beginning of his life."[91] Rawlins, however was much different. With Rawlins and Grant, "The relations which existed between them were unusually close and intimate. They were due to his fidelity, his intense earnestness, his severe morals, his aggressive temper… his fearless contempt for vice and vicious men…"[92] Rawlins served Grant by providing a fail to Grant's personality weaknesses with an "aggressive and impatient temper" and inserting passion into his deliberations.[93] Grant had an awareness of his own weaknesses and valued Rawlins contributions dearly, enough to make him Secretary of War later in life.[94]

Eisenhower and Bedell Smith were more a case of reinforcing personalities, which, with Eisenhower, is what was called for since he didn't really suffer from extreme personality deficits like some of the other geniuses. This isn't to say that their relationship wasn't vital, as they were "open and candid with one another, they sometimes disagreed and debated specific issues vigorously; to some extent each served to balance and check the other's ideas."[95]

In contrast, de Guingand specifically and consciously used the differences in his personality to temper and modify the impacts of Montgomery's extreme personality. In perhaps the best example of the value of differing personalities, both Montgomery and de Guingand recognized the potential value of playing foil to each other. Monty explicitly said, "We were complete opposites; he lived on his nerves and was highly strung; in ordinary life he liked wine, gambling, and good food. Did the differences matter? I quickly decided that they did not; indeed, differences were assets."[96] De Guingand, too, acknowledged the value of the nature of their opposite relationship and set himself to smoothing the rough edges Montgomery invariably created in his pursuit of victory. As de Guingand put it, "A great deal of my time was spent in removing points of friction and smoothing over problems of human relations."[97] Ultimately, de

Guingand's biographer summarized the nature of the value of differing personalities quite well in his account of Monty and Freddie's relationship: "a partnership which, formed from two disparate personalities, would create a duo which was greater and more effective than the sum of its parts."[98]

## The Counter Examples

Two of the most well-known military geniuses in US history, Robert E. Lee and George Patton, deserve further discussion because they achieved military success despite having a clear-cut supporting relationship with a key-subordinate. In both of these cases, though, they could have benefitted significantly from such a relationship, and to some extent, their success was tempered due to the lack of one. In this sense, then, the hypothesis still fits, as the argument is not that success is impossible without the key-subordinate, but that success can be enhanced by the presence of a well-functioning relationship with one. Lee and Patton were, then, perhaps aberrations whose genius still managed some success.

Robert E. Lee did have a loyal adjutant in Colonel Walter Taylor throughout the war, whom he trusted as a friend and whom advised him throughout the war.[99] Colonel Taylor was not, though, given significant responsibility nor asked to perform any significant staff or command roles during the role, save for a few ad-hoc assaults.[100] Lee certainly relied on Stonewall Jackson and Longstreet for battle leadership, but never brought them into the deep confidence necessary for the genius to key-subordinate relationship. In fact, the young Taylor was the only officer who could claim "to occupy the position of confidential staff-officer with General Lee."[101] As history records, Lee eventually lost the Civil War, and he suffered from some unity of command issues, especially with Ewell, at Gettysburg.[102] To be fair, hypothetical retrospect is quite suspect, and certainly the lack of such a relationship can't be determined to be directly

causal for Lee's ultimate defeat. Circumstantially, though, it certainly appears that Lee could have benefitted from a more constructive relationship with a more empowered key chief of staff like Berthier or de Guingand.

In Patton's case, the potential benefit of a functioning relationship with a key-subordinate is easier to discern. Patton really needed someone Rawlins-like to protect him from himself, and to some extent his impact on the war diminished because of the lack of protection. The infamous "slapping incident" is of course one example where Patton's fire possibly limited his own career.[103] In fact, it led to Bradley's promotion over him to command the D-day invasion force: "Patton was the senior officer, and the command would have been his almost by default had the slappings in Italy not occurred."[104] Had Patton had a calming, counseling influence, maybe the slappings could have been avoided, maybe not. In any case, though, Hobart Gay, Patton's loyal adjutant, was not helping, as he "lacked the breadth and depth of intellectual capacity. His prejudices and politics paralleled Patton's, and as a consequence reinforced instead of correcting them."[105] Patton's personality was so over the top that he needed a foil, not a reinforcing function. Again, it is hard to say if a more constructive relationship would have made much of a difference, but clearly Patton's genius was diminished by his inability to vector his personality extremes, and a focusing protective influence from a key-subordinate may have helped.

## The Negative Cases

An important validator for the argument that the key-subordinate relationship is crucial for successful military geniuses is cases where a direct comparison can be made to the performance of the genius without their right-hand man. The circumstantial cases of Lee and Patton contribute to this validation, but fortunately there are some more direct examples.

Napoleon's experience at Waterloo is the most telling.  The defeat, of course, is attributable to a number of factors, but in many ways it was largely due to the inability for Napoleon, one of the greatest military geniuses ever, to get his vision implemented: "The French ability to exploit the situation was lessened by the congestion and poor staff work that left about a third of the Army still south of the River Sambre at 9:00PM.  This delay did not promise well for the speedy moves necessary to exploit the central position and interior lines that Napoleon had opened up.  He suffered from the absence of his long-time chief of staff, Marshal Berthier."[106]  In the end, Napoleon essentially "lost control of the course of the battle."[107]  The manifestations of this poor staff work were many, and severe, but there was only one real reason for it: Berthier's replacement, Marshall Soult.  At Waterloo, Soult "was inactive (and incompetent) as chief-of-staff, a role he should have never been given, for he was not by any means staff material."[108]  The necessity of Berthier's close relationship with Napoleon to their success stands in sharp relief in this example.  Historians can only wonder what might have been if, as Napoleon exclaimed, "only my poor Berthier were here!"[109]

A second, but less clear cut, case exists with Grant and his faithful bulldog, Rawlins.  In this case, the example is less direct because Rawlins was with Grant through all his military campaigns.  It wasn't until his Presidency that Rawlins stopped serving him (although he was initially Secretary of War).[110]  However, Grant's failings as a president began soon after Rawlins succumbed to tuberculosis, and the decline of his influence was noticeable.  In fact, "Rawlins in the White House might have been able to protect the president from his natural inability to distinguish cheats, sharpers, thieves, and con artists from honest men."[111]  Rawlins biographer summarizes how the contrast of Grant without Rawlins showed so clearly how important their relationship was:

All agree that so long as Rawlins was the final, if not the principal, adviser in all the great emergencies in Grant's life, and that in all military affairs from first to last Grant's efforts were crowned with marked success, and neither hurtful criticisms nor failures overtook him in the field or in the White House, till after death had deprived him of the counsel and advice of his faithful and fearless friend; it must now be evident that Rawlins was a vital and essential factor of the dual character which has passed into history under the name of Grant.[112]

Here again, then, the benefit of a trusting key-subordinate that complements and rounds out the capabilities of his genius, is quite clear. Many geniuses have likely struggled and failed in obscurity due to the lack of such a reinforcing partnership. In the case of Napoleon and Grant, we have the rare insight into two cases where success with, and failure without, the key-subordinate was recorded by history.

## Conclusion

All of this evidence should not diminish the importance, rarity, and awe associated with the great military geniuses. War, after all, is a combination of art and science fully comprehendible to very few, and, "this apportioning of accident and science cannot get into any head except that of a genius. Accident, hazard, chance, call it what you will, a mystery to ordinary minds, becomes a reality to superior men."[113] Unlike the great scientific geniuses, however, military genius cannot reach manifestation without the cooperation and efforts of large numbers of other people. This fact, combined with the complexity and scope of military affairs, means that the successful geniuses must trust, confide, and rely on a key-subordinate in order to effectively translate their genius into military action. The eight case studies presented illustrate the varying degrees, types, and qualities of these relationships throughout history. In general, the successful relationships start with the genius placing a high level of trust in the key-subordinate; trust that is perhaps hard for geniuses to bestow, given their inherent personalities and capabilities. Once

this trust is established, the relationship becomes effective based on the key-subordinate's ability to translate the genius's vision, his ability to lead people and conduct staff work, and the depth of his loyalty to his chief, in good and bad times. Even if all this is in place, the best relationships only thrive from a meshing of personality that either reinforces the genius's best qualities, or, often, counters the genius's idiosyncratic tendencies.

In reality, the great military geniuses are, of course, quite rare. These lessons, however, are instructive to a vast range of military relationships in all domains. The qualities of the key leader to key-subordinate relationships, while critical to implementing genius, are equally key in almost any leader to chief-of-staff relationship. This is the real lesson of this study. There is as much to learn about leadership, command, and staff work from studying the seconds-in-command and their relationships to their leader as there is in the traditional study of the leaders themselves. In many cases, these subordinate roles may be the places where many military officers, whatever their position, make the most impact during their careers. Berthier and de Guingand may not be as legendary as Napoleon or Montgomery, but their contributions to history in their roles as a key-subordinate to a military genius, are truly remarkable.

## Notes

(All notes appear in shortened form. For full details, see the appropriate entry in the bibliography.)

1. McMahon, *Divine Fury*, 87.
2. *Ibid*., 84
3. *Ibid*., 144.
4. Watson, *A Life of Marshall Berthier*, 171.
5. Stoneman, *Alexander the Great*, 59.
6. D'Este, *Patton: A Genius for War*, 549.
7. Stoneman, 1.
8. Grainger, *Alexander the Great Failure*, 90
9. Stoneman, 55.
10. Golway, *Washington's General*, 212.
11. *Ibid*., 3.

**Notes**

12. Watson, 107.
13. Wilson, *The Life of John A. Rawlins*, 369.
14. Snyder, *Walter Bedell Smith: Eisenhower's Chief of Staff*, 12.
15. De Guingand, *Generals at War*, 103
16. *Ibid*., 105.
17. De Guingand, 97.
18. McMahon, 143.
19. Stoneman, 55.
20. Watson, 117.
21. *Ibid*., 47, 52, 59, 67.
22. *Ibid*., 195
23. *Ibid*., 47
24. Stoneman, 26.
25. Hammond, *The Genius of Alexander the Great*, 77, 86.
26. *Ibid*., 87, 106, 109.
27. Grainger, *Alexander the Great Failure*, xix.
28. Golway, 4.
29. *Ibid*., 123.
30. *Ibid*., 230, 287.
31. Tower, *Lee's Adjutant*, 12.
32. Wilson, 378.
33. Snyder, 11.
34. Smith, *Eisenhower's Six Great Decisions*, 7.
35. Snyder, 12.
36. *Ibid*., 11.
37. De Guingand, 96.
38. Richardson, *Send for Freddie*, 235.
39. Grainger, 81.
40. Golway, 115, 142, 173.
41. Watson, 64.
42. *Ibid*., 63.
43. *Ibid*., 133-134.
44. *Ibid*., 64.
45. Snyder, 7.
46. *Ibid*., 11.
47. *Ibid*., 10.
48. *Ibid*., 10.
49. Richardson, 150.
50. *Ibid*., 235.
51. *Ibid*., 235.
52. Grainger, 31, 42.
53. Stoneman, 27.
54. Hammond, 77.
55. Golway, 183.

**Notes**

56. *Ibid*., 97-98.
57. Greene, *Major General Nathaniel Greene*, 87-88.
58. *Ibid*., 90.
59. Golway, 160.
60. *Ibid*., 230.
61. Watson, 7.
62. *Ibid*., 9.
63. *Ibid*., 10.
64. *Ibid*., 147.
65. *Ibid*., 206.
66. Snyder, 10.
67. Richardson, 235
68. Stoneman, 20.
69. *Ibid*., 55.
70. Hammond, 125.
71. Grainger, xviii.
72. Korda, *Ulysses S. Grant*, 124.
73. *Ibid*., 73.
74. Wilson, 369.
75. *Ibid*., 373.
76. *Ibid*., 9.
77. *Ibid*., 88.
78. *Ibid*., 173-174, 193.
79. Golway, 164.
80. Snyder, 12.
81. De Guingand, 101.
82. *Ibid*., 106.
83. *Ibid*., 107-112.
84. Hammond, 115.
85. Golway, 303.
86. *Ibid*., 153, 216.
87. *Ibid*., 130, 178.
88. McLynn, *Heroes and Villains: Inside the Minds of the Greatest Warriors in History*, 359-360.
89. Watson, 230.
90. *Ibid*., 50.
91. Korda, 13.
92. Wilson, 20.
93. *Ibid*., 21.
94. *Ibid*., 352.
95. Snyder, 9.
96. De Guingand, 67.
97. *Ibid*., 105.
98. Richardson, 236.

## Notes

99. Tower, 1.
100. *Ibid.*, 20.
101. *Ibid.*, 1.
102. *Ibid.*, 15.
103. D'Este, 534.
104. *Ibid.*, 550.
105. *Ibid.*, 418.
106. Black, *The Battle of Waterloo*, 79.
107. *Ibid.*, 30.
108. Delderfield, *Napoleon's Marshalls*, 210.
109. Watson, 107.
110. Wilson, 352.
111. Korda, 124.
112. Wilson, 380
113. McLynn, 321.

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